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THE

# Protestant Religion

VINDICATED,

From the Charge of

**Singularity and Novelty:**

IN A

# SERMON

Preached before the

# KING

AT

*Whitehall*, *April* the 2d. 1680.

By *JOHN TILLOTSON*, D. D. Dean of *Canterbury*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

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## JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

*If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom you will serve.*

THese are the words of *Joshua*, who, after he had brought the People of *Israel* thorough many difficulties and hazards into the quiet posession of the promised land, like a good Prince and Father of his Country was very sollicitous, before his death, to lay the firmest foundation he could devise of the future happiness & prosperity of that People in whose present settlement he had, by the blessing of God, been so successful an instrument.

And because he knew no means so effectual to this end, as to confirm them in the Religion and Worship of the true God, who had by so remarkable and miraculous a Providence planted them in that good Land; he summons the people together, and represents to them all those Considerations that might engage them and their posterity for ever, to continue in the true Religion. He tells them what God had already done for them, and what he had promised to do more, if they would be faithful to him: And on the other hand, what fearful calamities he had threatned, and would certainly bring upon them, in case they should transgress his Covenant and go and serve other Gods. And after many Arguments to this purpose, he concludes with this earnest Exhortation at the 14*th verse*, *Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.*

And to give the greater weight and force to this Exhortation, he do's by a very eloquent kind of insinuation as it were once more set them at liberty, and leave them to their own election: It being the nature of man to stick more stedfastly to that which is not violently imposed, but is our own free and deliberate choice: *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom you will serve.*

Which words offer to our consideration these following Observations.

1. *It is here supposed that a Nation must be of some Religion or other.* Joshua do's not put this to their choice, but takes it for granted.

2. *That, though Religion be a matter of choice, yet it is neither a thing indifferent in it self, nor to a good Governour what Religion his people are of.* Joshua do's not put it to them as if it were an indifferent matter whether they served God or Ido's; he had sufficiently declared before which of these was to be preferred.

3. *The true Religion may have several prejudices and objections against it: If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord*, intimating that upon some account, and to some persons, it may appear so.

4. *That the true Religion hath those real advantages on its side, that it may safely be referr'd to any considerate mans choice.* And this seems to be the true Reason why Joshua refers it to them: Not that he thought the thing indifferent, but because he was fully satisfied that the truth and goodness of the one above the other was so evident, that there was no danger that any prudent man should make a wrong choice, *If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom you will serve*; intimating, that the plain difference of the things in competition would direct them what to chuse.

5. *The Example of Princes and Governours hath a very great influence upon the people in matters of Religion.* This I collect from the Context: And Joshua was sensible of it; and therefore though he firmly believed the true Religion to have those advantages that would certainly recommend it to every impartial mans judgment, yet knowing that the multitude are easily imposed upon and led into error, he thought fit to encline and determine them by his own example, and by declaring his own peremptory resolution in the case, *Chuse you this day whom you will serve; as for me, I and my house will serve the Lord.* Laws are a good security to Religion; but the Example of Governours is a living Law, which secretly overrules the minds of men, and bends them to a compliance with it,

*——— Non sic inflectere sensus*
*Humanos edicta valent, ut vita Regentis.*

The Lives and Actions of Princes have usually a greater sway upon the minds of the people than their Laws.

All these Observations are I think very natural, and very considerable. I shall not be able to speak to them all; but shall proceed so far as the time and your patience will give me leave. First,

First, *It is here supposed that a Nation must be of some Religion or other*, *Joshua* do's not put it to their choice, whether they would worship any Deity at all. That had been too wild and extravagant a supposition, and which it is likely in those days had never entred into any mans mind. But he takes it for granted that all people will be of some Religion; and then offers it to their consideration which they would pitch upon, *Chuse you this day whom you will serve, whether the Gods which your fathers served*, &c.

Religion is a thing to which men are not only formed by education and custom, but, as *Tully* says, *Quo omnes duce naturâ vehimur*, It is that to which we are all carried by a natural inclination: which is the true Reason why some Religion or other hath so universally prevailed in all Ages and places of the world.

The temporal felicity of men, and the ends of Government can very hardly, if at all, be attained without Religion. Take away this, and all Obligations of Conscience cease: and where there is no obligation of Conscience, all security of Truth and Justice and mutual confidence among men is at an end. For why should I repose confidence in that man, why should I take his word, or believe his promise, or put any of my interests and concernments into his power who hath no other restraint upon him but that of humane Laws; and is at liberty in his own mind and principles to do whatever he judgeth to be expedient for his interest, provided he can but do it without danger to himself? So that declared Atheism and Infidelity doth justly bring men under a jealousie and suspition with all mankind: And every wise man hath reason to be upon his guard against those from whom he hath no cause to expect more justice and truth and equity in their dealings than he can compel them to by the mere dint and force of Laws. For by declaring themselves free from all other obligations they give us fair warning what we are to expect at their hands, and how far we may trust them. Religion is the strongest band of humane Society; and God so necessary to the welfare and happiness of mankind, as if the Being of God himself had been purposely designed and contrived for no other end but the benefit and advantage of men: So that very well may it be taken for granted, that a Nation must be of some Religion or other.

Secondly, *Though Religion be a matter of our choice, yet it is neither*

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a thing indifferent in it ſelf, nor to a good Governour, what Religion his people are of. Notwithſtanding the ſuppoſition of the Text, *Joſhua* doth not leave them at liberty whether they will ſerve God or Idols; but by a very Rhetorical Scheme of Speech endeavours to engage them more firmly to the worſhip of the true God.

To countenance and ſupport the true Religion, and to take care that the people be inſtructed in it, and that none be permitted to debauch and ſeduce men from it, properly belongs to the Civil Magiſtrate. This power the Kings of *Iſrael* always exerciſed, not only with allowance, but with great approbation and commendation from God himſelf. And the caſe is not altered ſince Chriſtianity: The better the Religion is, the better it deſerves the countenance and ſupport of the Civil Authority. And this Power of the Civil Magiſtrate in matters of Religion was never called in queſtion, but by the *Enthuſiaſts* of theſe later times: And yet among theſe, every Father and Maſter of a Family claims this Power over his Children and Servants, at the ſame time that they deny it to the Magiſtrate over his Subjects. But I would fain know where the difference lyes. Hath a Maſter of a Family more power over thoſe under his Government than the Magiſtrate hath? No man ever pretended it: Nay, ſo far is it from that, that the natural Authority of a Father may be, and often is, limited and reſtrained by the Laws of the Civil Magiſtrate. And why then may not a Magiſtrate exerciſe the ſame power over his Subjects in matters of Religion, which every Maſter challengeth to himſelf in his own Family, that is, to eſtabliſh the true worſhip of God in ſuch manner and with ſuch circumſtances as he thinks beſt, and to permit none to affront it, or to ſeduce from it thoſe that are under his care. And to prevent all miſunderſtandings in this matter, I do not hereby aſcribe any thing to the Magiſtrate that can poſſibly give him any pretence of right to reject Gods true Religion, or to declare what he pleaſes to be ſo, and what Books he pleaſes to be *Canonical* and the *Word of God*; and conſequently to make a falſe Religion ſo currant by the ſtamp of his Authority, as to oblige his Subjects to the profeſſion of it: Becauſe he who acknowledgeth himſelf to derive all his Authority from God, can pretend to none againſt him. But if a falſe Religion be eſtabliſhed by Law, the caſe here is the ſame as in all other Laws that are ſinful in the matter of them, but yet made by a

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lawful Authority; in this case the Subject is not bound to profess a false Religion, but patiently to suffer for the constant profession of the true.

And to speak freely in this matter, I cannot think (till I be better inform'd, which I am always ready to be) that any pretence of Conscience warrants any man, that is not extraordinarily commission'd as the Apostles and first Publishers of the Gospel were, and cannot justifie that Commission by Miracles as they did, to affront the establish'd Religion of a Nation (though it be false) and openly to draw men off from the profession of it in contempt of the Magistrate and the Law: All that persons of a different Religion can in such a case reasonably pretend to, is, to enjoy the private liberty and exercise of their own Conscience and Religion; for which they ought to be very thankful, and to forbear the open making of Proselytes to their own Religion, (though they be never so sure that they are in the right) till they have either an extraordinary Commission from God to that purpose, or the Providence of God make way for it by the permission of the Magistrate.

And that they are guilty however of gross Hypocrisie who pretend a further obligation of Conscience in this matter, I shall give this plain Demonstration, which relies upon Concessions generally made on all hands, and by all parties. No Protestant (that I know of) holds himself obliged to go and preach up his Religion and make Converts in *Spain* or *Italy:* Nor do either the *Protestant* Ministers or *Popish* Priests think themselves bound in conscience to preach the Gospel in *Turky*, to convert the *Mahometans*. And what is the reason? because of the severity of the Inquisition in *Popish* Countreys, and of the Laws in *Turky*. But doth the danger then alter the obligation of conscience? No certainly; but it makes men throw off the false pretence and disguise of it: But where there is a real obligation of conscience, danger should not deter men from their duty, as it did not the Apostles: which shews their case to be different from ours, and that probably this matter was stated right at first. So that whatever is pretended, this is certain, that the *Priests* and *Jesuits* of the Church of *Rome* have in truth no more obligation of conscience to make Converts here in *England* than in *Sweden* or *Turky*; where it seems the evident danger of the attempt hath for these many years given them a perfect discharge from their duty in this particular. I shall joyn the

*Third*

*Third* and *Fourth* Obſervations together. That *though the true Religion may have ſeveral prejudices and objections againſt it, yet upon examination there will be found thoſe real advantages on its ſide, that it may ſafely be referred to any conſiderate mans choice: If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve. If it ſeem evil unto you*, Intimating that to ſome perſons and upon ſome accounts it may appear ſo. But when the matter is truly repreſented, the choice is not difficult, nor requires any long deliberation, *Chuſe you* this day *whom you will ſerve*. Let but the Cauſe be fully and impartially heard, and a wiſe man may determine himſelf upon the ſpot, and give his Verdict without ever going from the Bar.

The true Religion hath always layen under ſome prejudices with partial and inconſiderate men; which commonly ſpring from one of theſe *two* cauſes, either the *Prepoſſeſſions of a contrary Religion*, or the *contrariety of the true Religion to the vicious inclinations and practices of men*, which uſually lyes at the bottom of all prejudice againſt Religion. Religion is an enemy to mens beloved luſts, and therefore they are enemies to Religion. I begin with the *firſt*, which is as much as I ſhall be able to compaſs at this time.

I. *The Prepoſſeſſions of a falſe Religion*; which commonly pretends *two* advantages on its ſide, *Antiquity* and *Univerſality*; and is wont to object to the true Religion *Novelty* and *Singularity*. And *both* theſe are intimated both before and after the Text: *Put away the gods which your fathers ſerved on the other ſide of the flood, and in Egypt: And chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve, whether the gods which your fathers ſerved on the other ſide of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whoſe land ye dwell.* Idolatry was the Religion of their Fathers, and had ſpread it ſelf over the greateſt and moſt ancient Nations of the world, and the moſt famous for Learning and Arts, the *Chaldeans* and *Egyptians*; and was the Religion of the *Amorites* and the Nations round about them. So that *Joſhua* repreſents the *Heathen Religion* with all its ſtrength and advantage; and do's not diſſemble its confident pretence to *Antiquity* and *Univerſality*, whereby they would alſo inſinuate the *Novelty* and *Singularity* of the worſhip of the God of *Iſrael*. And it is very well worthy our obſervation, that one or both of theſe have always been the exceptions of falſe Religions (eſpecially of *Idolatry* and *Superſtition*) againſt the true Religion. The ancient Idolaters

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of the world pretended their Religion to be *ancient* and *universal*, that their Fathers served these gods, and that the worship of the God of *Israel* was a plain Innovation upon the *ancient* and *Catholick* Religion of the world, and that the very first rise and original of it was within the memory of their Fathers; and no doubt they were almost perpetually upon the *Jews* with that pert Question, *Where was your Religion before Abraham?* and telling them, that it was the Religion of a very small part and corner of the world, confined within a little Territory: But the great Nations of the world, the *Egyptians* & *Chaldeans*, famous for all kind of knowledg and wisdom, and indeed all the Nations round about them, worshipped other gods: And therefore it was an intolerable arrogance and singularity in them, to condemn their Fathers and all the world, to be of a Religion different from all other Nations, and hereby to separate themselves and make a *Schisme* from the rest of mankind.

And when the Gospel appeared in the world, which the Apostle to the *Hebrews* (to prevent the scandal of that word) calls *the time of Reformation*; the *Jews* and *Heathen* still renewed the same objections against Christianity. The *Jews* urged against it, not the ancient *Scriptures* and the true word of God, but that which they pretended to be of much greater Authority, the *unwritten* Word, the ancient and constant *Traditions* of their Church; and branded this new Religion with the name of Heresie, *After the way* (saith S. *Paul*) *that you call Heresie, so worship I the God of my Fathers; believing all things that are written in the Law, and in the Prophets.* By which we see, that they of the Church of *Rome* were not the first who called it *Heresie* to reject human Traditions, and to make the Scripture the Rule of Faith: This was done long before by their reverend Predecessors, the *Scribes* & *Pharisees*.

And the *Gentiles*, they pretended against it both *Antiquity* and *Universality*, the constant belief and practice of all Ages, and almost all places of the world; *Sequimur majores nostros qui feliciter secuti sunt suos*, says *Symmachus*: *We follow our fore-fathers, who happily followed theirs*: But you bring in a new Religion never known nor heard of the world before.

And when the Christian Religion was most miserably depraved and corrupted, in that dismal night of ignorance which overspred these *Western* parts of the world about the *Ninth* and *Tenth Centuries*; and

many pernicious Doctrines and superstitious practices were introduced, to the woful defacing of the Christian Religion, and making it quite another thing from what our Saviour had left it; and these corruptions and abuses had continued for several Ages: No sooner was a *Reformation* attempted, but the Church of *Rome* make the same outcry of *Novelty* and *Singularity*: And though we have substantially answered it a thousand times, yet we cannot obtain of them to forbear that threadbare Question, *Where was your Religion before Luther?*

I shall therefore apply my self to answer these *two* Exceptions with all the brevity and clearness I can: And I doubt not to make it appear, that as to the point of *Universality* (though that be no wise necessary to justifie the truth of any Religion) ours is not inferiour to theirs; if we take in the Christians of all Ages, and of all parts of the world: And as to the point of *Antiquity*, that our Faith and the Doctrines of our Religion have clearly the advantage of theirs; all *our* Faith being unquestionable ancient, *theirs* not so.

1. As to the Point of *Universality*; which they of the Church of *Rome*, I know not for what reason, will needs make an inseparable property and mark of the true Church. And they never flout at the Protestant Religion with so good a grace among the ignorant People, as when they are bragging of their Numbers, and despising poor Protestancy because embraced by so few. This *pestilent Northern Heresie* (as of late they scornfully call it) entertained it seems only in this cold and cloudy corner of the world, by a company of dull stupid people, that can neither penetrate into the proofs nor the possibility of *Transubstantiation*; whereas to the more refined *Southern* Wits all these difficult and obscure Points are as clear as their Sun at Noon-day.

But to speak to the thing it self. If Number be necessary to prove the truth and goodness of any Religion, *ours* upon enquiry will be found not so inconsiderable as our Adversaries would make it. Those of the *Reformed* Religion, according to the most exact calculations that have been made by learned men, being esteemed not much unequal in number to those of the *Romish* perswasion. But then if we take in the ancient Christian Church, whose Faith was the same with ours; and other Christian Churches at this day, which all together are vastly greater and more numerous than the *Roman* Church, and which agree with us, several of them in very considerable Doctrines and Prac-

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Ctices in diſpute between us and the Church of *Rome*, and all of them agree in diſclaiming that fundamental point and *main hinge* of the *Roman* Religion (as *Bellarmin* calls it) I mean the *Supremacy of the Biſhop of* Rome *over all Chriſtians and Churches in the world*, then the Number on our ſide will be much greater than on theirs.

But we will not ſtand upon this advantage with them. Suppoſe we were by much the fewer. So hath the true Church of God often been, without any the leaſt prejudice to the truth of their Religion. What think we of the Church in *Abraham*'s time, which for ought we know was confined to one Family, and one ſmall Kingdom, that of *Melchiſedec* King of *Salem*? What think we of it in *Moſes* his time, when it was confined to one people wandering in a Wilderneſs? What of it in *Elijah*'s time, when beſides the *two* Tribes that worſhipped at *Jeruſalem* there were in the other *ten* but *ſeven thouſand that had not bowed their knee to Baal*? What in our Saviour's time, when the whole Chriſtian Church conſiſted of twelve Apoſtles, and ſeventy Diſciples, and ſome few Followers beſide? How would *Bellarmine* have deſpiſed this little Flock, becauſe it wanted one or two of his goodlieſt marks of the true Church, *Univerſality* and *Splendor*? And what think we of the Chriſtian Church in the height of *Arrianiſm* and *Pelagianiſm*, when a great part of *Chriſtendom* was over-run with theſe Errors, & the number of the *Orthodox* was inconſiderable in compariſon of the *Hereticks*?

But what need I to urge theſe Inſtances? As if the Truth of a Religion were to be eſtimated and carried by the *Major Vote*; which as it can be an Argument to none but Fools, ſo I dare ſay no honeſt and wiſe man ever made uſe of it for a ſolid proof of the truth and goodneſs of any Church or Religion. If multitudes be an Argument that men are in the right, in vain then hath the *Scripture* ſaid, *Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil*: For if this Argument be of any force, the greater Number never go wrong.

2. As to the Point of *Antiquity*. This is not always a certain mark of the true Religion. For ſurely there was a time when Chriſtianity began, and was a new Profeſſion; and then both *Judaiſm* & *Paganiſm* had certainly the advantage of it in point of Antiquity. But the proper Queſtion in this Caſe is, *Which is the true Ancient Chriſtian Faith, that of the Church of* Rome, *or Ours*? And to make this matter plain it is to be conſidered, that a great part of the *Roman* Faith is the ſame

with *Ours*; as namely, the Articles of the Apoſtles *Creed*, as explained by the firſt four General Councils. And theſe make up our whole Faith, ſo far as concerns matters of meer and ſimple Belief, that are of abſolute neceſſity to Salvation. And in this Faith of Ours there is nothing wanting that can be ſhewn in any ancient *Creed* of the Chriſtian Church. And thus far *Our* Faith & *theirs* of the *Roman* Church are undoubtedly of equal Antiquity, that is, as ancient as Chriſtianity it ſelf.

All the Queſtion is, as to the matters in difference between us. The principal whereof are the twelve Articles of the Creed of Pope *Pius* the IV. concerning the *Sacrifice of the Maſs*, *Tranſubſtantiation*, the *Communion in one kind only*, *Purgatory*, *&c.* not one of which is to be found in any ancient *Creed* or Confeſſion of Faith generally allowed in the Chriſtian Church. The Antiquity of theſe we deny, and affirm them to be innovations; and have particularly proved them to be ſo, not only to the anſwering, but almoſt to the ſilencing of our adverſaries.

And as for the *negative* Articles of the *Proteſtant* Religion, in oppoſition to the errors and corruptions of the *Romiſh* Faith, theſe are by accident become a part of our Faith and Religion, occaſioned by their errors: as the renouncing of the Doctrines of *Arrianiſm* became part of the *Catholick* Religion, after the riſe of that Hereſie.

So that the Caſe is plainly this; We believe and teach all that is contained in the *Creeds* of the ancient Chriſtian Church, & was by them eſteemed neceſſary to Salvation: and this is *Our* Religion. But now the Church of *Rome* hath innovated in the Chriſtian Religion, and made ſeveral additions to it, and greatly corrupted it both in the Doctrines and Practices of it: And theſe *additions* and *corruptions* are *their* Religion, as it is diſtinct from ours; and both becauſe they are *corruptions* and *novelties* we have rejected them; and our rejection of theſe is our Reformation. And our Reformation we grant (if this will do them any good) not to be ſo ancient as their corruption: All Reformation neceſſarily ſuppoſing corruptions and errors to have been before it.

And now we are at a little better leiſure to anſwer that captious Queſtion of theirs, *Where was your Religion before Luther?* Where ever Chriſtianity was; in ſome places more pure, in others more corrupted; but eſpecially in theſe *Weſtern* parts of Chriſtendom overgrown for ſeveral Ages with manifold errors and corruptions, which the Reformation hath happily cut off, and caſt away. So that though our *Refor-*

*formation* was as late as *Luther*, our *Religion* is as ancient as Christianity it self. For when the *Additions* which the Church of *Rome* hath made to the *ancient* Christian Faith, and their Innovations in practice are pared off, that which remains of *their* Religion is *ours*; and *this* they cannot deny to be every tittle of it the ancient Christianity.

And what other answer than this could the *Jews* have given to the like question, if it had been put to them by the *ancient Idolaters* of the world, *Where was your Religion before Abraham?* but the very same in substance which we now give to the Church of *Rome?* That for many Ages the Worship of the one true God had bin corrupted, and the worship of Idols had prevailed in a great part of the world; that *Abraham* was raised up by God to reform Religion, and to reduce the Worship of God to its first institution; in the doing whereof he necessarily separated himself and his family from the Communion of those Idolaters. So that though the *Reformation* which *Abraham* began was new, yet his *Religion* was truly ancient, as old as that of *Noah*, and *Enoch*, and *Adam*. Which is the same in substance that we say, and with the same and equal reason.

And if they will still complain of the *newness* of our *Reformation*, so do we too, and are heartily sorry it began no sooner; but however better late than never. Besides, it ought to be considered, that this objection of *Novelty* lies against all Reformation whatsoever, though never so necessary, and though things be never so much amiss: And it is in effect to say, That if things be once bad, they must never be better, but must always remain as they are; for they cannot be better without being reformed, and a Reformation must begin sometime, and when ever it begins it is certainly new. So that if a real Reformation be made, the thing justifies it self; and no objection of *Novelty* ought to take place against that which upon all accounts was so fit and necessary to be done. And if they of the Church of *Rome* would speak but their minds out in this matter they are not so much displeased at the Reformation which we have made because it is *new*, as because it is a *Reformation*. It was the humour of *Babylon* of old (as the *Prophet* tells us) that she *would not be healed*, *Jer.* 51. 9. and this is still the temper of the Church of *Rome*, they *hate to be reformed*, & rather than acknowledge themselves to have been once in an error, they will continue in it for ever. And this is that which at first made, and still entaintec

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the breach and *ſeparation* between us, of which we are no wiſe guilty who have only reform'd what was amiſs, but they who obſtinately perſiſt in their errors, and will needs impoſe them upon us, and not let us be of their Communion unleſs we will ſay they are no errors.

II. The other *prejudice* againſt the true Religion is, *the contrariety of it to the vicious inclinations and practices of Men.*

It is too heavy a yoke, and lays too great a reſtraint upon humane Nature. And this is that which in truth lies at the bottom of all objections againſt Religion, *Men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil.*

But this Argument will require a diſcourſe by it ſelf, and therefore I ſhall not now enter upon it; only crave your patience a little longer whilſt I make ſome reflections upon what hath been already delivered.

You ſee what are the *exceptions* which Idolatry and Superſtition have always made, and do at this day ſtill make, againſt the true Religion; and how ſlight and inſignificant they are.

But do we then charge the Church of *Rome* with Idolatry? Our Church moſt certainly does ſo, and hath always done it from the beginning of the Reformation; in her *Homilies*, and *Liturgy*, and *Canons*, and in the *Writings* of her beſt and ableſt *Champions*. And though I have, as impartially as I could, conſider'd what hath been ſaid on both ſides in this controverſie; yet I muſt confeſs I could never yet ſee any tolerable defence made by them againſt this heavy charge. And they themſelves acknowledg themſelves to be greatly under the ſuſpicion of it, by ſaying (as Cardinal *Perron* and others do) that the Primitive Chriſtians for ſome Ages did neither worſhip Images, nor pray to Saints, for fear of being thought to approach too near the Heathen Idolatry: And which is yet more, divers of their moſt learned men do confeſs, that if Tranſubſtantiation be not true, they are as groſs Idolaters as any in the world. And I hope they do not expect it from us, that in complement to them, and to acquit them from the charge of Idolatry, we ſhould preſently deny our ſenſes, and believe Tranſubſtantiation; and if we do not believe this, they grant we have reaſon to charge them with Idolatry.

But we own them to be a true Church; which they cannot be, if they be guilty of Idolatry: This they often urge us withal, and there ſeems at firſt ſight to be ſomething in it: And for that reaſon I ſhall endea-

endeavour to give so clear and satisfactory an answer to it, as that we may never more be troubled with it.

The truth is, we would fain hope, because they still retain the Essentials of Christianity, and profess to believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, that notwithstanding their corruptions they may still retain the true Essence of a Church: as a man may be truly and really a man, though he have the plague upon him; and for that reason be fit to be avoided by all that wish well to themselves: But if this will not do, we cannot help it. Therefore to push the matter home, Are they sure that this is a firm and good consequence, *That if they be Idolaters, they cannot be a true Church?* Then let them look to it. It is they, I take it, that are concerned to prove themselves a true Church, and not we to prove it for them. And if they will not understand it of themselves, it is fit they should be told that there is a great difference between concessions of charity and of necessity, and that a very different use ought to be made of them. We are willing to think the best of them; but if they dislike our charity in this point, nothing against the hair: If they will forgive us this injury, we will not offend them any more: But rather than have any further difference with them about this matter, we will for quietness sake compound it thus; That till they can clearly acquit themselves from being Idolaters, they shall never more against their wills be esteemed a true Church.

And now to draw to a Conclusion.

*If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord*, and to worship him only; to pray to him alone, and that only in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ, as he hath given us Commandment; *because there is but one God, and one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus. If it seem evil unto you*, to have the liberty to serve God in a Language you can understand; and to have the free use of the Holy *Scriptures, which are able to make men wise unto Salvation*; and to have the Sacraments of our Religion entirely administred to us, as our Lord did institute and appoint.

And on the other hand, if it seem good to us, to put our necks once more under that yoke, which our Fathers were not able to bear: If it be really a Preferment to a Prince to hold the Pope's Stirrup, and a Priviledge to be deposed by him at his pleasure, and a courtesie to be kill'd at his command: If to pray without understanding, and to obey

bey without reaſon, and to believe againſt ſenſe; if Ignorance, and implicit Faith, and an Inquiſition be in good earneſt ſuch charming and deſirable things: Then welcome Popery; which, wherever thou comeſt, doſt infallibly bring all theſe wonderful Priviledges and Bleſſings along with thee.

But the Queſtion is not now about the *choice*, but the *change* of our Religion, after we have been ſo long ſettled in the quiet poſſeſſion and enjoyment of it. Men are very loth to change even a falſe Religion. *Hath a Nation changed their Gods, which yet are no Gods?* And ſurely there is much more reaſon why we ſhould be tenacious of the Truth, and hold faſt that which is good.

We have the beſt Religion in the World, the very ſame which the *Son of God* revealed; which the *Apoſtles* planted, and confirmed by Miracles, and which the *noble Army of Martyrs* ſealed with their Blood: And we have retrench'd from it all falſe Doctrines and ſuperſtitious Practices which have been added ſince. And I think we may without immodeſty ſay, That upon the plain ſquare of Scripture and reaſon, of the Tradition and Practice of the firſt and beſt Ages of the Chriſtian Church, we have fully juſtified *Our* Religion, and made it evident to the World that our Adverſaries are put to very hard ſhifts, and upon a perpetual diſadvantage in the defence of *Theirs*.

I wiſh it were as eaſie for us to juſtifie our Lives as our Religion. I do not mean in compariſon of our Adverſaries (for that, as bad as we are, I hope we are yet able to do) but in compariſon of the Rules of our holy *Religion*, from which we are infinitely ſwerv'd; which I would to God we all did ſeriouſly conſider and lay to heart: I ſay, in compariſon of the Rules of our Holy Religion, which *teach us to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World, in expectation of the bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, &c.

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